

SEPTEMBER 1954

IF • WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION

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35 CENTS

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THE TEST COLONY

By Winston Marks



WORLDS of SCIENCE FICTION

SEPTEMBER 1954

All Stories New and Complete

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COVER PICTORIAL ATOMIC POWER PLANT

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The Work-out Planet

*Colonial life on Mars with a
"chicken" like Shirley was
enough to make any Earth-
man shudder. But what can
you do when you are mentally
incompetent and legally
trapped?*

BY R. E. BANKS

IT WAS Saturday afternoon and I was in our study-lab working on my home cyclotron. The cyclotron was so new that Nora hadn't paid for it yet, but at least the solution to my troubles was at hand. Now I could finish my einsteins.

That year I had been unable to find work for more than six weeks—all because I hadn't finished my einsteins. Most people these days finish them by the age of twenty-one or two, but I was thirty-two and beginning to worry. So was Nora. It was more than a little embarrassing that the greatest female scientific theorist in New York City had a husband with a low IQ. So after having held my last job for only two days—a job which was hardly more than an office boy's—I had gone out and bought the home cyclotron. I thoroughly intended to put an end to this nonsense about my being an intellectual lightweight. I had taken a vow not to leave home until I had finished my einsteins and though Nora lifted her brows at the cost of the machine, she had said nothing. Perhaps because she was too wrapped up in her work on the "Mathematical Point-Count of the Surfaces of Great Paintings."

"Doesn't anyone answer doorbells on earth, Mr. Singer?"

I turned in surprise to see a young woman standing in the door. Then my heart sank. It was Nora's cousin from Mars, Shirley Remington. She looked very odd indeed. She wore a light wool dress that outlined her body instead of a leisure-work smock or the standard female coveralls. Her hair was too long and waved, a mass of bronze, making her head look heavy to me

because the female butch haircut hasn't changed in fifty years. She wore archaic lipstick on her mouth and her eyebrows were neat and plucked which stamped her as a Colonial.

I had seen pictures of her when Nora's uncle Remington had visited Earth about three years before. At that time he had the crazy idea that she should come to Earth to find a husband, since men were so short in the colonies, but we'd talked him out of it then.

"Hello," I said, trying to hide my shock at her ugliness. "What brings you all the way from Mars?"

"Didn't Nora tell you I was coming?" she asked in surprise.

"No," I said. Her face showed no signs of work at all; no lines on her skin, no red veins in the eyes. A smooth, shiny complexion like the ugly, unmarked petal of a garden rose. She even had a tan from being outdoors and not working very hard.

"Quite frankly," she said, "I've come to New York to find a suitable and pleasing mate. We've had the usual cosmic ray storms on Mars and the male situation is fantastic. So when Nora said for me to come on ahead and see what I could do in New York, I came flying—or rather rocketing."

That struck me as queer. Of course Nora would be mildly interested in the marital success of her cousin, but Nora has very little time for such foolishness and trying to introduce this ugly girl (nylon hose!) around in New York would be a sheer waste of effort.

"Excuse me for sounding doubtful, Miss Remington," I said, "but you don't have a line on your face.



Illustrated by Paul Orban

Your figure is too youthful. It's too curvy to be frank with you. No man on Earth would look at you twice."

"I realize my shortcomings," she said with an undisturbed grin. "But Cousin Nora is a very smart person and she told me to come. I'm leaving the answers to her."

Disgusted that I had to interrupt my work, I led the girl to the spare room. There was the smell of flowers about her, some artificial concoction she called "perfume" and a long way from the socially acceptable aroma of perspiration that every attractive young Earth girl favors. I accidentally touched her while picking up her luggage and shuddered at her softness.

NORA was in her lab behind the garage. Dr. Ryder was there also. I knew they were very busy, working on Nora's demonstration to be given that evening before the Society of Electrostatic Engineers. But I couldn't help puzzling over Nora's intentions. Certainly she knew that my work on the einsteins had to be gotten through with at all possible speed and she couldn't expect me to jockey her unattractive cousin around the city on a fruitless hunt for a man.

Dr. Ryder was in the harness that Nora had designed. It was a very clever contraption, destined to open a whole new field of leisure-work. Nora had an original Rembrandt on the scanning surface and her computer was scanning the work of the old master carefully, reading each and every brush stroke he had made. She had a photospectrometer set up alongside—one of those de-

vices which can distinguish over two million shades of color. The paint was mixed to the proper shade by automatic devices. The artist—in this case Dr. Ryder—was standing before a canvas with his arms locked in a sort of harness. As the scanner read out each brush stroke Rembrandt had made on that original painting centuries ago, the harness duplicated the stroke in terms of motion on Ryder's arms, controlled by an analog servo-mechanism loop. Ryder was painting a Rembrandt which, when finished, would be indistinguishable from the original except for age effects.

No value in duplicating Rembrandt, of course. The value was in training the artist's muscles. After Ryder had painted Rembrandt and Van Gogh and a half-dozen other great artists for hour after hour, he would have some concept of how the masters worked. In six months he would know more about painting techniques than a man could learn in ten years under the old system. This exciting technique, designed for leisure work, was just another brilliant idea of Nora's—Nora Remington Singer's Art-Aid, she called it.

"I thought I told you we were busy," said Nora.

Nora turned off the Thompson Probe and Ryder slipped out of the harness with a sigh, exercising his tired arms.

"Your cousin from Mars is here," I said. "I deem that important enough to interrupt you. Especially when she tells me you encouraged her to come to Earth on a fool's errand."

Nora looked at Bob Ryder and

he looked at her. I didn't like that look. "I think she's very wise to come to earth to find a man," said Nora.

"Her looks are all against her."

Nora is conscious of her own great beauty. She's lived a full life. Though only three years older than I, she looks fifty. The hard lines of her face, the deep pouches under her eyes, and the bent posture of her body give her a great animal attraction. I have seen men stop in sheer astonishment at her admirable work-worn figure.

"Standards of beauty are different on Mars," said Nora.

"If she's brought money, she has a chance," said Bob.

"And I suppose I'm the one to take her around and introduce her—"

Nora laughed. "Now, Hal, don't get excited. You *are* out of a job—"

"I'm working hard on my einsteins—"

"And you completely ruined my digital read-outs on the 'Mathematical Point-Count System' last week, and so I'd think you could make yourself useful to *someone* in my family."

"For years," I said angrily, "you've complained because you've practically supported me. Now with the new home cyclotron I can get my einsteins done and maybe find a decent job. That's all I'm trying to do and each day's delay means another day that I'm a stone around your neck."

"Oh, now, Hal, you mustn't feel that way."

"Having a low IQ is no crime," smiled Bob Ryder. "Why, if I had a 120 I'd be proud. At least it sets you apart in a city where the dull

normal is 160."

"The Thompson Probe gives me headaches and so I work slower, Mr. Scientist," I said. "Someday I may surprise you all."

"Someday," said Nora with a sigh, "you may even be smart enough to figure out how to distinguish molecules of dust from paint molecules on my Mathematical Point-Count System of Art. That's more than I can do. But meanwhile Shirley is here and she's brought quite a large sum of money with her which has to be taken care of and you can make yourself useful by taking her to Mr. DuPres."

I felt a wave of relief. Smart Nora! Mr. DuPres was our lawyer and the logical man to handle Shirley's problem. As a member of one of the professions he was in the bottom quarter of society, for on Earth the technical skills predominate. Therefore he would be glad to handle Shirley for a fee. And being acquainted with lawyers, teachers, divines, doctors and other riff-raff, he could probably find somebody for Shirley, someone of low taste who would accept the Martian idea of beauty.

"That's different," I said.

"Well, be off with her!" cried Nora with enthusiasm. "And after the lawyer's show her some of New York, if you want. I'll not be home for supper anyway, since Bob and I have to leave early for the demonstration."

My relief changed to anxiety. Nora was too cheerful about the whole thing.

"DuPres may not be at his office. It's Saturday afternoon."

"DuPres will be at his office," said Bob. "I don't know of a lowly

professional in New York who can make a living on a five day work-week."

"I'll call just to make sure," said Nora. "I wanted to talk to him anyway."

I left them. I paused to make the complicated signal that brought the car out of the garage automatically, and I thought I heard a burst of laughter from the lab. My uneasiness grew. I'm not a jealous man, but Nora and Bob make a fine couple, he with his white hair and lined face and Nora with her work-seared body.

And when they get together they seem to talk down to me like a couple of parents to a simple-minded child. It would be well for me to get my einsteins done as soon as possible.

AS WE drove downtown I had to explain to Shirley about our work-week. No one considers their job as important as their leisure-work any more. In fact, employers have been trying to push through the 4½ day work-week. I had to explain that to Shirley, because on Mars the employers want to get the most out of their workers and the workers want to give as little as possible.

"It's simple," I said. "On Earth, leisure-work and hobbies increase the efficiency of the person. Take a man on a straight office job. In the office he may be merely shuffling papers around. But in his leisure-work he may be doing garden chemistry or a study of the molecular structure of plastics. His leisure-work is so difficult that ordinary office work becomes very

easy for him and he can do twice as much in half the time—because his leisure-work teaches him to think. Today work is the chief pleasure of mankind. At his office. Around the home. And in the all-important leisure-work that used to be called hobbies."

"All because of the Thompson Probe?"

"All because of the Thompson Probe. It has made the final revolution in mankind—the greatest since the Industrial Revolution. For centuries mankind complained that the layman could never catch up with science. Today all is changed. By the time he's reached his majority the average man (or woman) has become the equivalent of a graduate physics major in the old days. Science has a pretty hard time keeping up with us today," I said proudly.

We went past a large building that hummed with activity.

"What's that?" she asked pointing.

I laughed. "The public library."

"The library! It looks like a mob scene. Why, back home on Mars you'd see a crowd like that in front of the theatre but there's never a crowd at the library."

"They keep the libraries open all night long," I said. "They have had to cut book loan time to one week so that everybody will have a chance at them. Study is an important part of leisure-work, especially the classics and heavy scientific literature. A book can't be a best-seller any more unless it's pretty meaty on science."

A traffic policeman had his head bent over an experiment he was doing with a vacuum jar, and so I

scooted across on a changing light and ended up in a mob that overflowed the sidewalk.

"What's that crowd for?"

I shot a sidelong glance at the girl and felt a tingle of pleasure. Living with a scientist of Nora's mentality, I am usually the one to ask questions. Despite the girl's naiveté, she really wanted to know, and I didn't give her the look of impatience that Nora and her friends are always giving me when I ask questions.

"This is a work-out," I said, stopping our vehicle. "Leisure-work has its bad features. But we can expect this, the old principle of loss and gain, you know. For every advantage there is a disadvantage. To the truly objective mind, there is no purpose in hiding the bad features of our lives."

The man was doing his last work-out. For thirty or more years he had been using a Thompson Probe. He had worked hard for each 16 hours out of 24 under the Probe, every day of his life. The energy released by that machine had finally set its pattern on his nerve cells. The day finally came when he turned off his Probe—but couldn't stop working. He had to keep going, burning himself out.

He had been digging a patch of ground with a pick. The pick pounded the dirt with sludding blows and at each stroke the man gave a half-cry of anguish because the rest of his body was tired—abnormally tired after the years of ceaseless activity. The crowd about him was patient, grim-faced and respectful. Since no one has time any more for funerals, it is social custom to attend any work-out you

see and pay homage to the dying with applause.

The man raised his pick, gave a shriek and dropped to his knees as his heart exploded inside of him. He made some futile, erratic gestures, patting the ground and crawling for a moment in a spasmodic fashion, then he shoved his face into the dirt, quivered, and lay still.

The crowd applauded sombrely for his soul and then began to melt as a woman came out of the house with a home embalming kit and began to arrange his limbs. . .

SHIRLEY shuddered, reminding me again of her repugnantly soft body.

"Do people just die like that?"

"He led a happy, full life," I said. "He was probably fifty-two, three. No one lives any longer any more. Last year a man of fifty-eight was discovered and he caused a sensation. But in terms of work we accomplish four, five times as much as our ancestors who lived to be sixty-seventy. And we're not as neurotic."

She sighed. "Doesn't anybody have fun on Earth?"

"What kind of fun?"

"Oh, you know. Parties, and the beach and going to bars. Eating fine dinners and going to concerts and shows."

I was in a hurry to get rid of her, but I couldn't pass that remark up. Chuckling, I swung a couple of blocks out of the way to show her the largest movie theatre in New York. It's hidden between the 22-story All-Centuries Art Museum and one of the hundreds of build-

ings of the enlarged New York University. It has one hundred seats.

"Martin and Lewis," she said in surprise.

I smiled proudly. "We don't make fictional movies any more," I said. "Not since the Thompson Probe. This film is over two hundred years old and the only people who come to see it are the very young children and off-planet visitors."

"But I saw a TV set in your living room."

"Sure. Most of the programs are put on by the universities and the scientific institutes. Last year the convention of the Institute of Applied Science had an all-time record audience of 200 million. But there were some really fine papers—"

"On Mars people watch baseball," she said frowning. "Don't you even have that?"

"Baseball? Sounds familiar," I said. "Wasn't that the game they played on ice with skates and sticks?"

She made a sound of protest in her throat. Suddenly she put her hand on my arm. "Stop! There's a bar. My God, I could stand a drink—"

I stopped reluctantly. I hadn't been in a bar since I met Nora. Drinking fuddles the mind and prevents clear thinking necessary to work. There aren't very many bars, and they're mostly attended by antiquarians. This one was dimly lighted in the true tradition, repulsively inefficient. Shirley was sighing for the nostalgic New York of magnificent bars and restaurants she'd read about in history books. She fell to talking to the bartender

who was a hoarse-voiced old baboon of an Irishman, who obviously drank his own wares.

"Look what this dag-nabbed Thompson Probe has went and did," he said. "It's went and eliminated sex." He leaned over the bar and winked at Shirley and pinched her soft arm. "Take you now, Ma'm. In the old days you would've been a knockout."

"How did they went and eliminate sex?" asked Shirley, innocently cuddling forward on the ancient bar stool.

"Like Freud went and said," said the bar-keep. "You take a baby, well, that little child is curious about hisself. Right?"

"Right?" asked Shirley of me, sipping her drink.

"Right," I said glumly. I was thinking back to the day I met Nora. She was doing a study on "Stimulants and the Creative Mind." In those days ten years ago she was merely a bright student and I was a thorough-going antiquarian. I spent a lot of time in the bars. I had a chip on my shoulder against the world. The Thompson Probe that everybody used gave me a headache and I was way behind my friends in achievement. I was probably headed for a Clinic, but Nora saved me. She was always one to improve the world. Maybe she thought she could remake me. Anyway, she tried hard for ten years. . .

"That baby is curious about his body," said the bartender. "Then about his mother's body and finally about others. So he goes and grows up and this curiosity went and got sublimated."

"At Sublimation Junction," I said remembering an old tune and

letting the bubbles from the drink ping at my nose.

"You know a big joke?" said the bartender. "You take an adult, a scientist. You take a big-dome, like Dr. Devering or even this Nora Remington Singer dame—these giant brain types, all they're doing is being sublimated. Scientific curiosity is just a final result of the same old curiosity the kid had in his cradle. So what do they mean, giving papers on how to count up the paint dots on some picture, painted by some old-timer?"

Shirley grinned at me. "So what do they mean, Hal? These Nora Remington types?"

"The Thompson Probe allows total sublimation," I said defensively. "Freud pointed out the loss and gain factor in sublimation. Without sublimation, civilization couldn't exist. Of course, the primitive instincts continue to exist. Except that now the sex-drive is mostly swallowed in the curiosity sublimation. That's why a body that shows the effect of work is attractive, and a smooth, unmarked one like yours isn't."

"You're mighty ugly, sister," said the bar-keep, chucking Shirley under the chin.

"You're pretty ugly yourself, Grandpa," said Shirley. She sighed and took my arm. "Come on, Hal, let's go."

For a minute in the dim light she looked pretty good, and I thought that maybe she had a chance, but when we came out into the sun again, the clean, wind-blown look spoiled it.

"What about marriage and children," she said. "Gosh, I hope the Earth men still believe in children."

THE WORK-OUT PLANET

"Of course we do," I said. "But the begetting is unimportant. It is simply inefficient to make such a fuss over mating as our ancestors did. Think of the total loss in terms of wasted work hours. Today those hours are more reasonably spent in either job work or leisure-work or in a dreamless sleep."

"No dreams, Hal?"

"No. After a day under the Thompson Probe, you sleep like a stone."

She looked disturbed. "I see it," she said. "A New York as neat as a pin, efficient and happy. But I still don't see why—why do you revel in work?"

"Read history," I said. "There was a time when our technology exceeded the knowledge of the man on the street. Finally, beginning with the atom, it got so bad that the average man no longer trusted himself to make decisions in his own environment. He had a desire to know as much as the scientist himself knew. So science gave him the Thompson Probe."

She wrinkled her nose and showed her provincial prejudices. "Probe-smobe. I'm glad the Probe is outlawed on Mars."

"When Mars has enough books, labs and libraries they'll come to use the Probe," I said.

WE FOUND Mr. DuPres in. He was shuffling some papers on his desk and he looked very grave. For the hundredth time that day I had a feeling of misgiving. I didn't like the legal looking documents he had in front of him.

"I'm afraid I have some bad news for you, Mr. Singer," he said.

I waved a hesitant Shirley into the chair. After all, she was one of the family.

"Go ahead, DuPres."

He had a cringing look on his face. He handed me a paper. It was a divorce notice. It said that, due to my failure to support her, Nora Remington Singer, plaintiff, had decided to terminate our marriage and that she wished to collect fifteen thousand dollars from me which was the basic amount I should've brought home to support us in the ten years of our marriage. Fifteen hundred a year isn't very much but the law set the base very low and then insisted on it. In a world of work, of course, non-support is an ugly word, and I felt a cold clutch of horror.

"Nora wanted me to break the word to you," said DuPres. "She just called me a few minutes ago."

"I'll fight it!"

"You can't," he said. "The evidence is all here. Affidavits from her friends telling of her mental distress at having a stupid husband. Why, it isn't even a case for a human judge. I'm putting the evidence into the Computer Court at nine Monday. By ten-thirty she'll have her final decree."

"I'll cross-file!" I cried.

"The machines would throw out your case as soon as it scanned your salary reports. No, your marriage is dead. The important question now is—how can you raise the fifteen thousand dollars you owe Nora."

"It's Ryder," I fumed. "He's a high-erg man. That's all she wants. A goddam high-erg man."

"The court will most certainly demand fifteen thousand dollars of non-support money for Nora," said

DuPres insistently. "Have you any ideas, Mr. Singer?"

"I can lend you fifteen thousand dollars," said Shirley impulsively.

"Don't be ridiculous," I said.

"I don't think she's ridiculous," said DuPres. "Why don't you borrow the money from her?"

"I couldn't pay it back. I can hardly support myself on Earth."

"On Mars it would be different," said Shirley. "If you decided to come to Mars, you could get a fine job. . ."

"No. I don't want to go to Mars. Besides, you've brought your money as a dowry, in hopes of finding a young man."

DuPres cleared his throat. "As a matter of fact," he said, "I believe my client, Nora, had something like this in mind. She mentioned to me something about your coming to Earth to find a husband. And she mentioned the money you had. And Mr. Singer will be free of all marital engagements, effective at ten o'clock Monday morning."

We both stared at him in amazement. Shirley blushed. Nora had fit the pieces together in a very efficient, non-emotional way.

DuPres now brought out another piece of paper. "This marriage license is properly filled out," he said, "and needs only the signatures. I have a friend, a parson, whose offices are in the next building. We could wrap this whole thing up in a matter of minutes."

He smiled benignly as if he had just put over a big deal.

"You forgot one thing," I said.

"Oh, don't worry about the license," said DuPres. "It's dated for Monday. The law will recognize

the principle of convenience of ceremony, regardless of the stream of time."

I stepped up and let him have one on the jaw. He went over backwards in his swivel chair.

"My compliments," I said, "and you forgot that people have feelings."

Shirley and I stood on the sidewalk outside.

"Sure you won't borrow?" she asked.

"No. I'm not through with Nora yet."

I made a signal for the car and it came gliding up. I got in the car and she squeezed my arm. "Take care of your good right arm. The way you hit that man was the finest thing I've seen on Earth."

"Aren't you going back?" I asked.

"No," she smiled. "I've got a date with an old-fashioned bartender and a bottle of liquor."

I watched her go, head back, her ugly, over-womanly body swinging in a hippy walk. Let science pile invention on invention, I thought, there is always the earthy primitive oriented to breeding.

I was half-way home when a brilliant idea hit me with a flash. It was so good that I cried out in amazement. There was still a way to prove myself to Nora, better than finishing my einsteins or better than cornering her with an emotional appeal. She hated the waste energy of an emotional appeal anyway.

Nora was stumped on how to distinguish the dust molecules from

paint molecules on her Mathematical Point-Count System.

"Hal," I told myself, "Hal you've never done well under the Thompson Probe. But now, son, you've got to come up with it. You've got to show them this time, or else—"

A LOT of poetics have been devoted to the Probe because of the marvelous things it's done for humanity. Actually it always looked to me like no more than a paint spray gun, and it worked as simply.

The Thompson Probe is a practical solution of man's oldest wish—to make available to himself the enormous mental energy he knows lies sleeping below the surface of every human mind. It emits non-thermal radiation which is played on the head and shoulders. This radiation is on the wave scale somewhere between visible light and ultra-violet. Thompson's spectrum, if you prefer, in which visible light is beginning to turn into something else before it becomes ultra-violet. It is very unstable, but it will radiate up to several hundred feet and for x number of hours before it loses shape and falls back into light rays or gains pulsations and moves up to ultra-violet.

(Is there anyone who hasn't experienced the foolish feeling of being in the middle of serious work and having the commutator in the Probe fail? Then your desire for work drains out of you and you're staring foolishly at a beam of useless light. Or, on the other hand, your commutator goes wild and burns the hell out of you—you get a sunburn strong enough to send you to bed for days.)

But when the Probe works properly it literally forces increased activity in the atoms of the brain. Perhaps the molecules creak and snap a bit, perhaps that's why we don't live as long—but to feel the pure energy of your full mind released for work—Ah, that is life's greatest pleasure!

I took out the set bar and moved up the generator. I moved it way up. The Probe is theoretically safe to handle the high metabolism rates of the very quick-minded, but any child can kick off the governor. No one in our intelligent world does, of course. But this was emergency. I set up the power level as high as it would go, way beyond the last safety factor, even for the highest metabolic genius. I felt some misgivings, but I had gotten myself into an all-or-nothing situation, and I restrained an impulse to fudge a little.

I rushed in and got Nora's papers on the dot count of the surface of pictures. She had all of her papers out, because, she had told me, she had been asked to donate them to the Museum. Now I knew better. She was simply breaking up housekeeping.

I went to the study and turned on the Probe and stepped into its rays. By midnight when Nora and Bob got home from the meeting they were going to find a little surprise waiting for them.

I'm used to standard Probe effects as is everyone on earth. But the blue-white jolt I got dazed me, even while I felt my mind turn over and the racing energy come with a jolt. I yapped and yammered like a lap dog because I was so jagged up. The thoughts cas-

caded in my mind and the headache-producing equations seemed to draw up on the paper and resolve themselves into marks as simple as "if I have four apples—"

Experiments were called for. All of the stuff was within the ray's beams, and I set up and activated a dozen different experiments at once. My hands flew as fast as my mind. I could feel my mind racing past the first fatigue and slipping down into a vast void of concentration. I worked like a very demon and muttered and laughed and quivered all over from the unaccustomed heavy charge of the Thompson Probe.

I got some of the feeling a work-out must have. The human mind-body stretched to the very limit of endurance. The nausea of fatigue grew like a round, black balloon. Yet I drove myself forward. Lights blurred in my eyes and I was blinded and yet I could still work and I worked—

NORA and Bob discovered me around midnight when they got home. I was lying twitching on the desk while my experiments rattled on unheeded and the paper tapes I had fed into the machine went on rattling out long equations. I had received an overload of energy and run into a sort of human short-circuit, being too young for a real work-out to death. But not, I thought with pleasure, before I had done some considerably good work. The last thing I remembered was when they put me to bed.

We are all doctors because everything short of surgery is fairly

easy for an alert mind to pick up. When I awoke about noon on Sunday, I instantly knew that it was going to take me a long time to recover from my efforts. Nevertheless, I was content. I crept downstairs in anticipation.

I found Shirley in the living room assembling her luggage. She looked very white and used up. "Try to find a hangover remedy in this lousy city," she moaned. "I'm glad I can still make the two o'clock rocket."

"Leaving?"

"I've gotten everything I wanted out of my trip. So I leave."

"How was last night?"

"We got drunk and sang old songs," she said, "and I flirted with an antiquarian."

"Where're Nora and Bob?"

Shirley shook her head. "I don't know. But there's a note on the breakfast table."

I crept into the breakfast room. Nora's note was to the point:

Dear Hal: A noble try. In all your years you've never done such a brilliant piece of work. But in your usual unobservant fashion you picked the wrong set of equations. You solved a problem I worked on years ago which has to do with paint coatings on buildings and the weathering effects. If you had the intelligence to have read my books, you'd have known.

P.S. Shirley has given me the non-support money. I think she was drunk. She murmured something about buying a man with a good right arm. I hope you'll be very happy together.

P.P.S. You're wrong about Bob and me. I've always envied Bob

his freedom of living alone. I'm going to be a bachelor too. You can get more work done. Goodbye
—Nora Remington.

I dragged myself into the living room where Shirley had just finished calling for a cab.

"You gave Nora the money," I accused her.

"I saved enough for your ticket to Mars," she said.

"I'm not going to Mars."

She grinned and waved a paper at me. "This says you have to. Old DuPres came in this morning and drew it up. You owe me fifteen thousand. I can offer you a job from which you can pay it back. The law says you either have to have your own job or take the job I offer or go to a readjustment Clinic for mental incompetence. And I don't think you can find a job here very easily, nor allow yourself to be sent to a Clinic."

I groaned. "I won't be bought like a side of beef!"

"Now, Hal, what a thing to say! Your bags are packed, thanks to Nora. Do you want to come quietly or shall I send for the police?"

What could I do? I was legally trapped and physically weak.

MY SEATMATE on the Mars rocket was an antiquarian. Each day Shirley brought me to the Solarium to enjoy the sun and left me neatly tucked in under the blankets. Each time this fellow would stare at her and then at me and then dig into the books and magazines he carried. Finally he spoke.

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who painfully nurtured civilization from an embryonic idea to its present pinnacle. We can do no more."

Allen flexed his arms involuntarily at the sheer enormity of the idea. It was one thing to let a useless race expire, quite another to think of its being forced back to—"But—can't anyone think of anything else to do?"

"Whoever is capable of devising anything else," the old doctor said resignedly, "will undoubtedly be able to carry it out with or without our assistance." He pressed more buttons and there was a muted sound of the voder calling a number. "The exit over there, Mr. Kinderwood. And—much happiness."

Allen's thoughts swirled in tumultuous confusion. Dimly, he realized that man had outstripped himself, and saw with intense bitterness that there was no answer on Earth

for any ordinary citizen. Or was there? And if there was, was it worth trying to find? He flung open the door to the corridor violently, as though the force could quiet his mind. Maybe, if he didn't use the permit, he could stay and figure out an answer. Nedda would be sympathetic and patient while—And then he stopped. Across the wide hallway, Nedda stood beneath a window, looking at him. And the blond youth held her with flushed understanding, impatiently waiting, caressing her arm with his hand, binding her to him with the one bond she could not break.

She watched Allen start slowly down the corridor. Once, when he stumbled, she gave a stifled sob, and tears brimmed and spilled silently when he passed through the door marked *Kansas City Department of Euthanasia*. . . .

THE WORK-OUT PLANET

"This chicken is your wife?" he asked.

"Chicken?"

He handed me an ancient Earth magazine. On the cover was the picture of a very ugly woman. She had been called Marilyn Monroe.

"That's a chicken," he said, "like yours."

I shrugged. "No, she's not my wife."

"If I'm not too curious, what are you going to do with her?"

"It's what she's going to do with me," I said glumly. "Her father is rich and I have to go to work for him. As for her, she has a great enthusiasm for archaic items like baseball, fine restaurants, bars,

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parties and—uh—breeding. I will probably have to escort her on these functions."

His eyes lighted up. "Rich dame, good-looking and sexy, likes a good time and gets a kick out of breeding. Brother, some people have all the luck!"

I sighed. "No. I'd give anything to be back in New York, working again, doing my einsteins and putting in a useful eighteen hours a day."

My seatmate gave me a look of disgust and pulled his blankets up over his face. He never spoke to me again. I can see it's going to be hard to get used to colonial thinking. . . .